



Chaplaincy Makes Me a Better Pastor

Providing spiritual support to law enforcement personnel is a unique gift from God

BY RYAN VAN KUIK

God called me to be a pastor to smaller rural churches. So where did this chaplaincy thing originate? I never saw it coming, but God was in it from day one!

It was during a discussion in 2006 on how the local ministerial could serve the R.C.M.P. that the concept of chaplaincy was first mentioned to me. The word 'chaplain' stuck out to me more than anything else that day and I

began to ponder what it might mean.

As I investigated and realized the potential for me to pursue this volunteer role at our local detachment, the idea grew on me. My wife, Juanita, liked the idea and encouraged me to pursue it further.

The outgoing Sergeant (who happened to be a Christ-follower), the Chaplain Coordinator for K Division of the

R.C.M.P. and my Board of Elders all expressed support. All signs were saying, “Go for it!” I began in January 2007 and by that Fall I was installed as Chaplain Ryan van Kuik of the Three Hills R.C.M.P. detachment.

A very exciting component of this was that our church totally got behind it. The members play a key

role by releasing me to perform my chaplaincy duties; they have made it a part of my pastoral responsibilities.

I have the privilege of serving as chaplain in a six-member detachment, so my chaplaincy focuses

on these six members, plus two civilian employees and all their families. With the small size, there is time to interact and enjoy relationships with each of them.

With their strong community focus, the church envisions me as an extension of them; chaplaincy is one way they are serving and being a part of our community. Often I have members of our congregation coming up to me and suggesting ways we can reach out to the members and civilian employees of our detachment. They regularly encourage me and ask for updates on the chaplaincy ministry.

In the world of law enforcement, police most often deal with people when they are at their lowest, frequently causing cynicism towards the general public. I believe, as a Christ-follower, I am called to bring the human perspective—to demonstrate love in places where there is so little love. Chaplaincy benefits the police detachment by providing pastoral care to its members but also encouraging them to deal with the public in a humane and loving way.

The detachment gets to see a church that is interested in them, and a congregation willing to release their pastor for several hours each week in order to serve, encourage, and spend time with them. I find myself often bragging about our church to these Mounties.

The church benefits from chaplaincy because it sees a ministry role that is not always clouded by the often ‘neat’ ministry of the pastorate. As a chaplain, I tend to face the nitty-gritty of lives lived without Christ. Chaplains are able to bring the love and wisdom of God to people who are searching. The church benefits by being actively involved in its community.

The church also benefits by having a better pastor. I am convinced that God has grown me through these activities. Chaplaincy has refocused me, keeping me from getting side-tracked by non-issues—keeping the main thing the main thing.

It has forced me to take a new look at the gospel, reigniting a passion in me to not only understand the



Photo by John Crawford

Swearing in Ceremony



Chaplaincy benefits the police detachment by providing pastoral care to its members

gospel as Jesus intended it, but to also know the depth of my sin and therefore the magnitude of Christ’s sacrifice.

It is exciting to serve in a denomination that validates and supports the ministry of chaplains and parish nurses.

As an Official Worker in the Western Canadian District, I have had opportunities to meet with the many other chaplains serving in various capacities around Alberta. We even have one of our Church Effectiveness Coaches assigned to us, and he has overseen the establishment of proactive networking among the Alliance chaplains of our district.

I encourage you to see chaplaincy as a valid ministry and one in which your church can become involved. Chaplains from your congregation can be an extension of the church. Plan to explore how a chaplain can fit in as a member of your church staff or as part of your missions/outreach programs. ☪

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